GALLANT LITTLE TOM.

A Reminiscence of a Washington Military Hospital During the War.

WRITTEN EXCLUSIVELY FOR THE EVENING STAR BY MRS. E. D. E. N. SOUTHWORTH.

I give thee all: I can no more,
Though poor the offering be.
My heart and life are all the store
That I can offer thee. —*Old Song.*

"LAY IT DOWN AND HELP LIFT HIM!" The time was the summer of 1863, just after the awful carnage of Antietam. The place was a public square in Washington where some temporary wooden buildings had been erected for hospital purposes and where were gathered a number of ambulances loaded with the wounded, dead (for some had died in transit) and dying from the bloody battle field. The speaker was an officer in a very shabby uniform, who was directing the movements of the soldiers who were carrying the victims from the wagons to the buildings. "It" was the mangled body of a boy who seemed to be dead, and by "him" was meant a very large and heavy soldier apparently very badly wounded, for he uttered groans at every movement that proved the soundness of his lungs.

The soldiers layed "it" down and helped to carry "him" into the hospital. Of course the living had to be cared for first. The dead could wait. So it might have been an hour or more before two soldiers came to carry "it" to the dead house.

"Never see a body so broke to pieces as this here. Why, I don't believe we could carry it whole any other way," said one of the men as they raised it by the four corner of a blanket on which it lay.

"Mother!" sighed the pallid lips of the boy on being moved.

"Why, he ain't dead after all!" exclaimed his bearers in a breath; and they let him gently down on his blanket to the ground, and one of them ran off to bring the surgeon, leaving the other to watch the boy.

The surgeons had their hands full, but a young medical cadet was dispatched to look after the case.

He came and knelt down beside the boy and looked into his pale, pinched face. The eyes were closed, but the lips were partly open, with the strain of patient pain marked upon his features.

After examining the case the cadet said that the youth's life was but a question of a few hours, perhaps minutes, and ordered him to be carried into the hospital.

There the dying boy was laid on a cot in the ward for the seriously or mortally wounded. Stimulants were administered to fan the flickering flame of life ere it should sink and expire. But no attempt was made to remove his torn and blood-soaked uniform or to make any examination of his wounds, for it was judged that such a proceeding would be worse than useless to the sinking boy—would only shake and exhaust him and hasten his death. He was arranged as comfortably as his condition would permit on his narrow cot and left to the care of Sister Aloysia, one of the Sisters of Charity who were on duty as nurses in the hospital.

Sister Aloysia was an angel in a white hood, if you believed the report of the sick and wounded in that hospital. A fair, stately gentlewoman of forty years, and the very ideal of health, energy, benevolence and cheerfulness, who, from her eighteenth year, had consecrated her life to works of mercy and charity. She had been on her feet all that day attending to the sufferers who had been brought in. It was now her time of relief and she might have gone to rest and left the ward to the care of her successor, but she drew near the bedside and saw the boy soldier, said to be wounded unto death and dying silently and patiently on his cot far away from all his friends. Accustomed as she was to sights of heroic suffering her heart was moved with such compassion that she gave up her season of rest and sat beside his cot to watch him to the last. Her ministrations were simple enough; to give him a stimulant at stated times, to put flakes of ice between his parched lips, to wipe his brow with a damp napkin and to watch and listen for any sign of a whisper that might express a desire.

But none came. There was no sign of life in that mangled form but the feeble pulse and faint breathing. It seemed the "Valley of the Shadow of Death," that night scene in the hospital ward.

Two rows of narrow white cots with their heads toward the walls, with a space between them and a long passage down the center. On every cot lay a mortally wounded or dying soldier under the merciful influence of narcotics to render the inevitable death as painless as possible. Another Sister of Charity, who had come to relieve Sister Aloysia, moving noiselessly from cot to cot where her services were most needed; a medical cadet seated at his desk near the entrance and an orderly within call; all seen dimly under the light of lamps and candles. Such was the night scene in that hospital ward.

At intervals the medical cadet would rouse himself and walk up and down between the rows of cots, looking at each of the patients to see if anything could be done for them.

Once during the night there was a quiet movement around one of the cots. Its occupant had died and the orderlies brought in a stretcher and carried the body out under the direction of the cadet.

Morning dawned and the hour approached when Sister Aloysia must give up her post to another and seek much needed rest. But before leaving the wounded soldier boy she determined to make as careful an examination of his condition as she dared without the risk of injuring him. She found his pulse a little stronger, his skin moist, his breathing easier and his general condition so much better that she resolved to do something on her own responsibility. She went to the kitchen and prepared some highly concentrated and easily digested food with which she fed him by teaspoonful doses, and found to her satisfaction that he could swallow, though he did so automatically, keeping his eyes closed. When she thought she had given him enough for the time being she ventured to speak to him and ask:

"How do you feel, my boy?"

"Tommy," he answered in a faint voice and with trembling lips, as his eyes opened and slowly closed again.

Warned by these symptoms of extreme weakness Sister Aloysia did not repeat her question, though she knew that he had misunderstood her.

She sat down beside him again. There was nothing more that she could do for him, not even smooth his bed spread or pillow, for he had lain so motionless that nothing had been disturbed.

Soon after this the surgeon in charge, attended by the medical cadet, came into the ward on his early morning round.

When he reached Tommy's cot and took Sister Aloysia's report for the night he made a careful examination of the patient and then murmured:

"Wonderful vitality!" and moved on.

As soon as her relief came the sister withdrew to take her needed rest. As she passed down the ward between the rows of mortally wounded and suffering men she moved silently and reverently on, feeling that on every cot with a dying man there was a domestic tragedy and heart-breaking sorrow.

Here and there beside an unconscious son or husband sat a heart-broken wife or mother, summoned by telegraph to the dying.

Sister Aloysia passed out deeply grieved for all, but mostly for the wan-faced boy who had been playing soldier, but had played the part valiantly, no doubt, and had got himself blown to pieces at his post of duty. Had he a mother? So many of these soldier boys who should rather have been at school had come from peaceful farm houses, fired with a love of "glory," adventure and patriotism, only to meet a bloody death on the battle field or lingering torment in the hospital! No one ever knew who he was. He would die and be buried, and the little board at the head of his grave would be inscribed:

THOMAS,

with the name of his company and regiment and the battle in which he was killed.

Such is the sole record of many who gave their lives for their country!

Poor little Tommy! There was a childish simplicity in which he had named himself, when in his weakened senses he had mistaken the good sister's question when she asked him how he felt. Not Thomas Jones or Parsons, or whatever might have been his full name, but just "Tommy," as a child might have answered.

Sister Aloysia thought it was morbid to feel so much for one poor young victim in a hospital full of victims, and in a world so full of sufferers. She prayed until she went to sleep. She slept several hours, until it was her turn of service. Her first waking thought was of Tommy. He was at rest by this time, she thought, as she hurried through her preparations and went to her ward.

Tommy's cot was at the extreme end from the entrance. As she passed in she noticed many changes that had taken place during the hours of her absence. All the cots were occupied when she left; now some were empty and others tenanted by new patients. She passed silently on, greeting one or two officials who were in the ward, until she came to Tommy's cot. It was occupied indeed, but by Tommy himself. She was surprised, moreover, to see that he had been washed and combed and had had his clothes changed and was not exactly dressed, but wound in strips of soft white sheets, and laid comfortably on a clean white bed. He was sleeping quietly. The surgeon in charge was going his rounds and stopped at Tommy's cot.

"I am surprised," said the sister in a low tone, "to find him still alive. Is there the least chance for him?"

"I do not think so," replied the surgeon; "he is very badly mangled. We had to cut his clothes off him and could not put others on. We had to wind him in strips of sheeting."

And then he gave Sister Aloysia some directions as to the treatment of the wounded boy and passed on.

Sister Aloysia had other duties. Indeed, all that ward was under her superintendence, and though she had a staff of assistant nurses, both men and women, she could not give the mangled boy as much attention as she would like to have done. Fortunately he did not require much service. All day long he lay quietly on his back, only taking food or medicine when feeling the spoon or glass placed to his lips. For a military hospital all was very quiet in the ward. Nothing broke the silence but an occasional moan from a man on a cot, that would bring a nurse to his side to change the hot wet napkin on his head for a cool one, or to put a flake of ice to his parched lips, or to give him food or medicine, or to attend to some other want.

At intervals the surgeon came in and walked his quiet rounds, pausing at each cot and giving directions to the nurse in attendance.

At nearly every round the surgeon would stand by the side of some silent and motionless patient, carefully examine him and then sign to men within call, who would quietly bring in a stretcher, on which they would lay the body from which the soul had taken its flight and remove it to the dead house. So several cots were vacated during the day, to be occupied by new sufferers, for a fresh detachment of wounded men had arrived from the battle field.

All this time Tommy lay quietly sleeping and Sister Aloysia, when she rested from walks of duty through the wards, sat down in a low chair beside his cot. Frequently she would be roused by a moan, when she would move silently to the side of the sufferer and minister to his needs.

Late in the afternoon the surgeon-in-chief, attended by several assistants, made his last round for the day and dressed the wounds of those that required his especial attention and gave directions for the night. In due course he came to Tommy's cot, where Sister Aloysia was resting. After a brief look he decided not to disturb him. To the sister's questions he expressed his surprise that the boy still "held the fort," as he called it, and then passed on. Soon after this Sister Aloysia was relieved and went to her rest, not forgetting in her orisons to recommend to "Mary Mother" the poor boy who was dying so far from his mother, if, indeed, he had one living.

Again when she entered the ward the next morning she found several changes. All of the cots were occupied, but many of them by strangers, silently telling the tale of deaths during the night. Other strangers were present there. Mothers, wives and sisters, who had been summoned to the dying to receive their last breath and to take home the bodies of their beloved ones. Some came even too late for that!

Sister Aloysia passed down the ward, silently but sympathetically bowing to the heart-broken women who sat beside the cots or speaking to the nurses, until she reached Tommy's cot, which she fully expected to find occupied by a new patient. But no!

Tommy was still lying there! Awake, conscious and replying in a weak little voice, but in a sensible manner, to the questions of a convalescent soldier, who was acting as nurse and who now sat in a chair beside him feeding him with a spoon from a bowl of beef tea that he held on his knee, for Tommy still lay flat on his back, unable to move hand or foot, scarcely able to wag his tongue. The soldier finished feeding him, wiped his mouth with a towel, and then, bowl in hand, rose, politely saluted the sister and gave his place to her.

"The boy is better?" said the sister.

"Yis, thanks to the howly saints and the blissid mither in hivin, Sister Aloysia! Though all the same it may be a decaivin' change! If mortification is set in——"

"Hush!" said the sister in a very low voice.

"Bliss the boy! he's not attendin'! See, he's dozed off, sister," said the man, as he sauntered off with his bowl and spoon.

But the boy had not dozed off, for when the sister stooped over him to look at him he opened his eyes and met her gaze with a grateful and even an affectionate look, which seemed to indicate that he had not been so unconscious of her tender ministrations for the past three days as he had seemed to be.

"How are you, Tommy?" she gently inquired.

"Better, I thank you, Miss Alice Louisa," he answered in a faint but grateful tone.

The sister smiled at the mistake the boy had made in her name, which, by the way, he continued to make, but she never corrected him.

"I thank heaven that you are better, my boy," she said, as she took her seat beside him.

"You are so good to me, Miss Alice Louisa," he said.

"Our Lord is good to you, Tommy. I do no more than He commands me to do for you. It is He whom you must thank. And now, Tommy, would you like me to write a letter for you to anybody?"

The boy sighed deeply and answered:

"No, I thank you, Miss Alice Louisa. It would only make mother cry and pappy couldn't let her come." The poor boy was almost crying himself, and the sister, fearful of exhausting him, said no more on the subject.

"As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you," murmured the sister.

"Yes, I know that text, Miss Alice Louisa. I used to hear it like a whisper when I was out yonder. And He will, won't He?"

"Surely, Tommy. Now go to sleep. I will see you again soon."

At this moment an agonizing cry rang through the ward. Several patients turned uneasily on their cots and moaned. Sister Aloysia went to see the cause of the outcry. It was from the young wife of a soldier who had just expired. Kind arms bore her out and kind hands and voices ministered to her.

More pathetic than these outbreaks of desperation were the patient sufferers who sat in mute despair beside their dying loved ones. The ward was full of woe. Every cot was occupied, but not one of the original patients who had been brought in with Tommy was left. All had died; most of them were buried. The rest had been embalmed to be sent to their distant homes. Only Tommy remained, and it was but a question of time, so the surgeons said, when he would die too. He still lay flat on his back, silent and motionless, except when he opened his mouth to answer a question or to swallow the food or medicine offered him. He was still "holding the fort."

An opinion seemed to prevail among the nurses that Tommy would go off suddenly at any moment. But in Tommy's own opinion he was always "better"—always "going to get well soon."

Sister Aloysia had found out all about him now.

His name was Thomas White. He had been "mortally wounded" while saving the colors of his regiment that had fallen from the hands of the slaughtered bearer. He would win promotion if he should live. But it was impossible for him to live—so his attendants decided.

The women who visited the hospital daily, bringing fruits, jellies, custards and other delicacies for the sick and wounded, became very much interested in the boy, and he was the first they would inquire about when they entered the building. And the answers to these inquiries would give the best index of Tommy's condition and progress. For the first few days the answer to the daily question, "How is Tommy?" would be "He is still alive." When Tommy was asked he would answer: "Better, I thank you, mam or sir; I'll soon be up and about, I thank you." Tommy was always cheerful, always patient, ever "better," and soon he was "going to get well," though no one but himself believed he would recover. He steadily refused to let any one write to his friends.

"It would only make my poor mother cry because pappy couldn't come, and she couldn't come neither. I'll soon get well, and then I'll write myself."

"Get well!" The words seemed a self-mockery when he lay there at the end of a fortnight of suffering almost as helpless as an infant. Yet he seemed thoroughly convinced that he was getting better every day and determined to get well as soon as possible. And, indeed, at the end of the month, when the terrible heat of summer had abated and had given place to the delicious breezes of our incomparable autumns, he began to move his hands a little to take a cup or spoon in his own fingers and to help himself. Henceforth his improvement was rapid.

There was not a soul of his old comrades left in the hospital. Most of them had died and were buried. The others had gone away. The time hung heavily on the poor boy. Sister Aloysia saw this and felt that his eyes would follow her all around the ward, so every leisure hour or half hour she could call her own she would sit beside his cot and talk or read to him, but she soon saw that her reading wearied him. He took no interest in books.

A day came at last when he asked for some writing materials and he wrote a letter to his mother telling her how he got wounded at the battle of A——n and was proud of it, and that he was in the hospital having a good time, the best he had ever had in all his life except when he was at home with her, and that Miss Alice Louisa (he did not know her other name) had been like an angel out of heaven to him, and finally how he was going home on a long leave just as soon as he was strong enough to travel, and he was her loving son, Tommy.

This letter brought a prompt reply full of affectionate solicitude for "Mother's Tommy," and inclosing another letter for "Miss Alice Louisa," to whom was also sent a keg of apple butter, and she was her grateful and obedient servant for ever and ever."

Tommy improved rapidly after this home correspondence, but still he was unable to stand upon his feet and was for some time confined to his cot or resting chair. The time to the bed-ridden boy, who could not be interested in books, was insupportably weary. One day Sister Aloysia said to him:

"Tommy, I wish I could do something to help you pass the time. It must seem very tedious to you."

"I thank you, Miss Alice," he said (he had given up his formal "Miss Alice Louisa" and now habitually called the sister "Miss Alice"). "You are so good to me, you are, but I'm 'feared you wouldn't do one thing for me."

"What is it, Tommy?"

"I'm 'feared to ask you, Miss Alice," he said, and he added, "You never would go for to play a game of cards 'long o' me, would you, Miss Alice? No, of course you wouldn't. Excuse me for asking you, Miss Alice. I must a been crazy to ask you such a thing. Deacon Martin would a turned me out of church for asking such a thing," he concluded, with a look of genuine mortification.

"Play cards? Why, of course I will play cards with you, Tommy, whenever I have time, if you want me to. There is no harm in cards. They are only bits of painted pasteboard. The harm is in gambling. Of course you don't mean that!"

"Oh, no indeed, I don't! But would you, for true?"

"Yes, Tommy, of course I would. It is as much my duty and my pleasure to play cards with you if, by so doing, I can enliven your sick bed, as it is to bring you your medicine and broth."

"Well, I never! I thought I'd gone crazy even to ask you! And I know Deacon Martin would turn a fellow out'n church for talking about such a thing. I shouldn't even think you knowed how to play."

"I used to play whist and euchre with my father and mother and brother at home before I entered upon my vocation."

"Euchre! Ain't that a nice game," said the delighted invalid.

After this a curious sight might be seen in the ward at odd times. A white-hooded sister of charity sitting beside the cot of a wounded soldier boy, with cards spread out on the outside of the counterpane, playing euchre with him. And none were found to object unless they were the sort of "saints" who found fault with the Son of God for eating and drinking with publicans and sinners, and poor little Tommy was neither the one nor the other. This entertainment for an hour or so every afternoon did him so much good that his health and spirits improved visibly. He had something to look forward to every morning when he woke, and something to do in the afternoon, and something to look back upon in the evening. Not a very high calling, but you must pardon him for being so childish, he was only a poor, weak soldier boy who had done his duty valiantly and had been shattered nearly to death, and whose mind was nearly as much shattered as his body; and, moreover, you must forgive the sweet sister for playing cards with him instead of reading terrifying tracts to him.

After this he mended so rapidly that he was soon transferred to the convalescent ward. And now, although he was no longer under Sister Aloysia's special care, yet she gave the boy as much attention as she could without neglecting her regular duties, but strangely enough from the time of his transfer Tommy's spirits flagged. As Sister Aloysia went in and out his eyes followed her with wistful earnestness, and as she turned away he would moan and cover his face with his hands. In vain did his comrades try to cheer him up by reminding him that he would soon be able to travel and would go home in time to spend Christmas with his family, with an honorable record and a long leave of absence. Tommy would only moan in answer. And the stronger he grew in body and the nearer the time of his departure approached the lower Tommy's spirits fell.

What was the matter with Tommy? Surely the soldier boy was not in love with the grave, middle-aged sister of charity! That idea was too richly absurd! Yet, how else was one to interpret his actions—the way in which his eyes would follow her; the moan with which he would turn from the door through which she would disappear and cover his face.

One day Sister Aloysia coming into the ward found him sitting at a table writing. He ceased as she drew near, and said in the agitated manner so peculiar to him now:

"I owe you so much, Miss Alice. I owe you more'n I will ever be able to pay you in this world."

"You owe me nothing, Tommy. It is to our Father in heaven that you and all of us are indebted for all that we are and all that we have and hope for. I have done what our Father ordered me to do. You must thank Him!"

"Yes, I know," said Tommy, "but——"

Tommy never got farther than "but" on such occasions, and he would blush and sigh.

"What is the matter with you, my boy? Are you not glad that the time for going home is so near?"

"Oh, you bet I am, Miss Alice! Awful glad!"

"You don't look it, my boy."

Tommy fetched a deep sigh.

"No, you don't look it! Is there any one here you are sorry to leave, Tommy?"

"No! n-n-no, Miss Alice, 'tain't that!"

"What is it then, Tommy, my boy, that troubles you?"

"Never mind what it is, Miss Alice, I'll do it! I ought to do it! And s'help me I will. I would be too mean to live on this earth if I didn't do it. There!"

"Some duty that lies before you, Tommy? Some hard duty?"

"Yes, Miss Alice, a duty! I oughtn't to call it a hard duty, and I ought to call it a pleasure, and I ought to be glad and happy to have it to do, but—"and here he ended with his usual sigh.

"But what, Tommy? Can't you tell me your difficulties? Perhaps I could help you."

"'Tain't that, Miss Alice. There ain't no difficulties. I almost wish there was. But there! How awful mean I am to say anything like that! But a fellow ain't always so thankful for his privileges as he had ought to be."

"None of us are, Tommy."

"But I'll do my duty and I'll try to be as proud and happy a man as I ought to be! S'elp me will I!" concluded Tommy, gulping down a sob and a fear.

Sister Aloysia was sorely distressed and puzzled by Tommy's condition. She had grown to have as nearly a mother's affection for the boy as a sister of charity was free to cherish for any individual. She would have done anything in her power to help him, but she was in utter ignorance of the cause of his trouble, which, it seemed, he could not confide to her, and which in common delicacy she could not farther probe. She contented herself now with saying:

"Well, Tommy, we must all do our duty, however hard and grievous it may seem to us, and we must look to the Lord for strength and comfort." And Tommy would say:

"But it seems to me that I am such a mean fellow to call it even a duty, when it ought to be a delight and a pleasure."

"Well, Tommy, my child, the Lord in His goodness may turn it into a pleasure and a delight," said Sister Aloysia.

"So He may! So He may! And so it is! And I'm a mean fellow, who ought to have been let die of my wounds for ever thinking it was ever anything else but the most joyful and happy thing as ever could happen to a fellow like me. Don't you think so, Miss Alice?"

"I think you are a good boy, Tommy. I know your are, but I don't quite understand you," said the sister, and at this moment a message from the surgeon in charge was brought to her and she left the ward, wondering what hard duty pressed upon the soldier boy's mind and whether she could help him. It was evident that one of those crises that come to all of us had befallen him and that the soldier boy's gallant little soul was now the battle field in which there was a fierce conflict between duty and inclination, but what it was no one could guess.

The last day came, the very last that Tommy was to sojourn in the hospital. He was walking up and down the ward in a more distracted manner than ever, when Sister Aloysia came in to look after her young patient.

"Tommy," she said in her admonishing way, "you had better sit down and keep quiet to save your strength for your journey tomorrow."

"Yes, Miss Alice," he replied in a submissive tone, as he went and sat down in his armchair, where he sighed and fidgeted and fidgeted and sighed. At last he mustered up courage to say:

"Miss Alice, would you mind me talking to you some?"

"Why, no, of course not," said the sister, drawing a chair near to him and seating herself.

"Miss Alice," he began in a subdued manner, "I wish I was a major general or a policeman, or somebody of importance."

He paused so long and in such deep embarrassment after saying this that the sister came to his relief by suggesting that it was something to be an honest man and a brave soldier.

"Yes, I know, but—" his usual halting word. Then suddenly, as if he had plucked up courage, he said:

"Miss Alice, you know that my pappy is a shoemaker?"

"Yes, Tommy, so you told me."

"And he makes boots and shoes and keeps a store for them."

"Yes."

"And I'm his only boy, and I learned my trade 'long o' him; and he 'lowed me a little wages for my work and never charged me nothing for my victuals and clothes."

"He was a kind father."

"So he was! And he 'vised me to lay up my money so's I could go into partners with him some o' these days."

"That was prudent."

"It was that! and I've saved lots! I've got $217 dollars in bank now!"

"A nice little sum to begin life with, Tommy," said the sympathetic sister.

"In the Bolton Centre Savings Bank; a real safe bank!" said Tommy, looking up anxiously into her face; then he paused.

Sister Aloysia did not understand the anxiety or the pause, so she could say nothing. Presently Tommy plucked up courage to say:

"And there is my back pay! must 'mount to almost as much more. I reckon as I ain't got much less than $500 to start on. Now, do you think that is enough to get married on and set up housekeeping on, Miss Alice? For I should have to set up housekeeping. I might go in partners with pappy, but I wouldn't never ask any lady to live 'long o' ma and all them children. It ain't good for two families to live together that away, is it Miss Alice?"

"It depends upon circumstances, Tommy. Such an arrangement sometimes makes the happiest of households."

"I'm 'feared it wouldn't be so for us," said Tommy.

"You should leave it to your parents and the young lady to decide," said Sister Aloysia, who now began to see that Tommy's late mental exercises had been upon the subject of matrimony, though she was far enough from suspecting the whole truth.

"So will I, Miss Alice. It's her right, ain't it?"

"Yes, Tommy; but who is the young lady?"

Tommy opened his blue eyes wide and stared for a few seconds, then inquired:

"What did you say, Miss Alice?"

"I asked you who is the young lady."

Tommy stared more intensely than before and then said slowly and sorrowfully:

"I thought I did not hear you right at first. The idea of you asking me who the young lady is!"

"But I would like to know, Tommy; I take that much interest in you," said the sister.

Well, I do declare, I do! Why it ain't any young lady at all, Miss Alice! It's you; you yourself! The idea of my offering myself to any young lady or any other lady in this world except you, yourself, after all you've done for me. No, I'm not that sort of an ungrateful fellow, Miss Alice! I am an honest man if I am a poor one! And I wish I was a rich man and a banker, or a general or a politician or something great for your sake; but if you will take me, Miss Alice, I'll do my level best for you, the Lord Almighty knows I will. I will work my fingers to the bone for you. (Poor Tommy was not original in his forms of expression.) I would do anything for you before you should want in this world; the Lord knows I would!"

Sister Aloysia understood now all the conflict that had disturbed the boy's soul and a certain sense of humor overcame her for the moment, so that she turned her mirthful face aside, but not before Tommy's watchful eyes detected the suppressed laughter, which he misinterpreted, when his own face brightened up with the light of heroic self-devotion and he murmured to himself:

"She is so glad! I have made her so happy! I am glad, too, that I did it! And I'll be good to her and as loving as if she was the prettiest girl in Bolton Centre! That I will!"

Now Sister Aloysia understood the poor, childlike soldier boy perfectly, understood all that had troubled his simple, grateful heart for the last few weeks. She saw that he had entirely misapprehended her position and knew nothing of the order to which she belonged; that he mistook her to be a poor, lonely, friendless old maid and a professional nurse who was working for her living and would gladly get married if she could. Tommy had a theory that all single women wanted to be married and consequently Miss Alice Louisa wanted to be married. She had been very good to him and he owed her his gratitude. How could he pay his debt better than by giving her himself and his life's service? He could not woo in very elegant language or talk to her about the worship of his whole soul and the devotion of his life, but he meant all that and a great deal more when he kept on repeating that he would "do his level best and work his fingers to the bone before she should want for anything in this world, that he would!"

Sister Aloysia laughed at him no longer, neither did she show the scorn and anger that a woman with more vanity and less charity might have felt and expressed. She turned to him with a grave and sweet smile, thanked him for the offer he had made her and explained the vows that bound her to her Divine Master for the service of His suffering children.

Tommy gazed and listened with amazement. All this was new to him. That any single woman should voluntarily bind herself by a vow never to marry and to spend all her life in nursing the sick and teaching the poor was to him an awful thing. Her lips' utterances were never equal to his thoughts or feelings. They were commonplace, not to say clangy. "Is—that—so?" was all he found to say to the (to him) amazing announcement of "Miss Alice."

"But, Tommy, my child, I am happy in this life,' said the good sister.

"Are you though, Miss Alice?" inquired the boy, incredulously.

"Indeed I am. Did you not see how happy I was when I was nursing and taking care of you?"

"Was you for true, Miss Alice?" he repeated.

"Quite happy, Tommy."

"Well, then," he said, hesitatingly, "if you was so happy nursing and taking care of me, why, you might be happy that way all the days of your life, you know. That is if you can get shet of them vows of yourn. If so be you would like to change your mind, if it was to be today or tomorrow, or next year, or any time, Miss Alice, I won't go back on my offer, you know. No! the Lord knows I won't!" declared Tommy.

Sister Aloysia explained to him that she could not "get shet of them vows" without sin, nor did she wish to do so.

Alas for woman's vanity, if the sweet sister had only seen for Tommy heaved "the sigh of a great deliverance," and she saw on his face the look of infinite relief. Then, as if conscience stricken by his own feelings of freedom from the obligation of marrying, he said:

"Is there anything in this world I can do to—to——"

"To please me, Tommy?"

"To pay you, Miss Alice! Oh, no! I don't mean that! Nothing on this earth that I could do would pay one-half for all you have done for me! I didn't mean pay! I mean—I—don't know what I mean!" And the brave little soldier boy who got himself shot nearly to death in rescuing the colors of his regiment was almost ready to cry because he could not utter the gratitude that was swelling his heart to bursting.

"I know what you mean, child. And, Tommy, if you wish to do something for me, you will take home some books I shall give you and read them. And you will write to me some times and let me know what you are doing, and let me write to you."

"Oh, won't I, though! I'd be proud and happy to do it. I won't only take the books home 'long o' me, Miss Alice, but I'll take 'em in my knapsack when I go back to the regiment, I will. And I won't only read your books, but I will learn every one of 'em by heart, I will, s' help me!" he cried, with tears springing to his eyes.

The next day Tommy started for his northern home. We have never heard of him since.

And Sister Aloysia?

Oh, a saint in heaven these many years.

Embarrassing.

From Puck.

Mr. Bedam—"What's the matter—why don't you engage her?"

Mrs. Bedam—"Well—er—Billy, she seems so refined, I'm afraid we won't exactly know how to treat her."

A Boy's Trustfulness.

From the Independent.

"I don't want any castor oil," said the sick little Boston boy, petulantly.

"Why, Horace," expostulated his mother, "don't you know that castor oil is made from beans?" and the little boy, whose faith in his mother is perfect, took the dose and feebly asked for more.

The Ruling Passion.

From Texas Siftings.

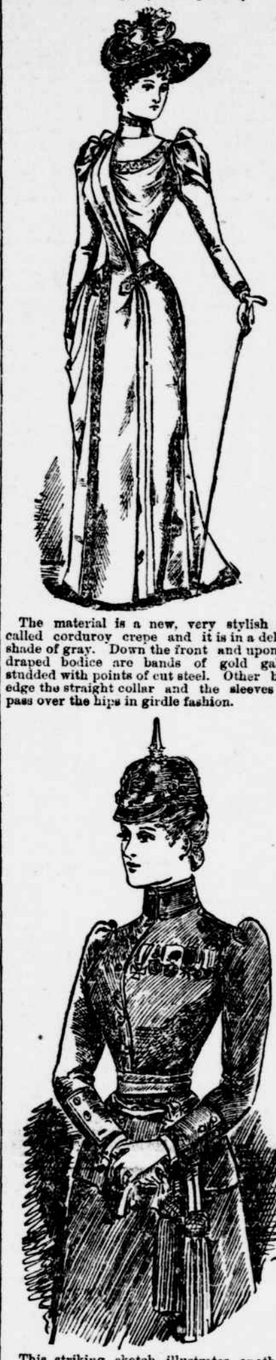
An Austin, Texas, lady was not expected to live through the day. Her husband mentioned to the dying woman that Mrs. Jones had called and asked how the invalid was coming on.

"What sort of a hat did she wear?" gasped the dying woman.

DRESSES FOR SPRING.

A Street Costume and an Amazon's Becoming Uniform.

The chilly dampness will render it impossible before the middle of April to permanently lay aside the winter clothing and assume the livery of spring. New apparel already completed and in its owner's possession must, with rare exceptions, be enjoyed rather in contemplation and anticipation than in the actual wearing. But down south, where roses bloom in December, the fortunate residents and sojourners are even now reveling in light dainty attire such as is only possible for northerners in mid-summer. Such gowns in wool crepons, challies and China silks Redfern is now making up by the dozen. The model here shown is one of those handsome dresses which is equally suitable for house or outdoor wear. In fashioning it Redfern has responded to the increasing demand for the longer skirt, which in this case means four inches in length (on the ground).



The material is a new, very stylish stuff called corduroy crepe and it is in a delicate shade of gray. Down the front and upon the draped bodice are bands of gold galloon studded with points of cut steel. Other bands edge the straight collar and the sleeves and pass over the hips in girdle fashion.

This striking sketch illustrates another of the Redfern specialties, the making of military uniforms for those princesses who, according to foreign custom, hold the rank of honorary colonels in various regiments. In the present instance it is the Duchess of Connaught, the Queen of England's daughter-in-law, who poses as chief of the eighth Brandenburg regiment of infantry. Her uniform is of Hungarian blue, piped with white, and the buttons bear the crest of the royal house of Brandenburg under the Hohenzollern eagle. The unbuttoned cuffs are a feature of the uniform, a memento of a battle when the regiment being suddenly called into action went with the sleeves unfastened, since which time the uniform of the corps has always been made in that way.

Aids Digestion and Saves Trouble.

From the New York Sun.

"Look at that man," said a Bowery restaurant waiter to one customer as he pointed to another. "He has ordered three boiled eggs. Watch how he eats them." The person referred to dropped his eggs into a cup, mashed them up with his spoon, seasoned them liberally with salt, pepper and vinegar, and devoured them with every appearance of relish. The singular part of the performance was that he ate them shells and all.

"Two other customers come here for breakfast and supper," said the waiter, "who eat their eggs that way. They order three eggs at every meal; so, you see, each man eats the shells of half a dozen eggs in a day. It's a queer custom, isn't it? I have asked them why they do it, and if they are not afraid the shells will hurt them, but they all say it aids digestion and saves trouble."

Why Big Men Have Little Wives.

From the Globe-Democrat.

There is a very general and ancient impression that big men in choosing wives prefer small women. At first glance this would appear to be true, because the number of big men with little wives is certainly in an overwhelming majority, as we see them. In the five years I have held my office I have learned a thing or two through the medium of the marriage license office and it is my impression that it is not the big men prefer little women, but that little women prefer big men, and it is the experience of the world-wise that what a woman wants and starts out to get she generally captures.

A Rare Example of Devotion.

Dubuque Dispatch to Chicago Times.

Miss Julia Redman of this city has not been half a block from her home in the last twelve years. During that time Miss Redman, who is a pretty and accomplished young woman, has been in perfect health. Her apparently strange conduct is due to the fact that she has been a constant attendant on an invalid mother, who died last week. Miss Redman today visited the business part of the city for the first time in twelve years. It had grown out of her recollection. She is now thirty-two years old. Hers is a rare example of a daughter's devotion.

The Hat of Other Days.

From the Auburn Gazette.

Mr. George Allen has a hat in his possession which he estimates must be over 150 years old. "The hat my father wore," "grandfather's hat," and "where did you get that hat," aren't a circumstance compared with this ancient tile. It is a beaver, with a genuine bell top, and was made in New York city. A bit of silk facing is on the top and bottom of the top part of the rim. This was to allow the raising of the hat without ruffling the fur.

The Car Window Paradox.

From the Chicago Tribune.

The young lady had tugged in vain at the car window. It refused to come up.

"Madam, permit me."

The smiling young man in the seat behind her reached over jauntily, seized the window with his white, slender hands and raised it without a particle of trouble.

Nothing of this kind, it is confidently believed, has ever been recorded before.

MIND READING AND MUSCLE READING.

How the Feats of Washington Irving Bishop Were Accomplished.

ONE WHO HAS INVESTIGATED THE SUBJECT SAYS MIND READING IS IMPOSSIBLE—SO-CALLED MIND READING IS EITHER MUSCLE READING OR DOWNRIGHT TRICKERY—FRAUDS BY BISHOP.

DR. CHARLES GATCHELL OF THE University of Michigan, in an article in the April Forum on "The Methods of Mind Readers," says:

Mind reading, in the sense in which the word is used by those who pretend to possess the alleged power, may be defined as the transference of a thought—that is, a mental concept, or an idea—from the mind of one person to the mind of another, without the use of the known mediums of communication, which consist of the nerves of general sensation and those of special sense. Mind readers claim that this feat is possible. In opposition to such claims I submit that profane history contains no trustworthy account of its accomplishment. It never will be brought about so long as man remains constituted as he is at present. It is opposed to the principles of evolution and to all known facts of physiology. Notwithstanding all that may be adduced to the contrary many believe that mind reading is one of the possibilities even if it is not one of the actualities of life. But the belief in every instance is founded either on insufficient evidence, or on faulty observation, or on a disposition to mistake the marvelous for the miraculous. Many accounts of alleged mind reading are purely fictitious. Others are exaggerations of trivial incidents or misinterpretations of observed phenomena. Others still are accounts of muscle reading. Those cases that do not belong to the classes named are accomplished by trickery.

WASHINGTON IRVING BISHOP.

After referring to various cases of persons who during the past century have claimed mind-reading powers, Dr. Gatchell says:

Of modern mind readers the late Washington Irving Bishop was best known in this country. Mr. Bishop was at the same time an expert muscle reader and a clever trickster. His most famous feat, the one from which he gained the greatest notoriety and most eclat, was that of driving a team of horses, while he was ostensibly blindfolded, at break-neck speed by a circuitous route through crowded streets, and finding, at a distant point, an object, or a name in a book, previously selected by a committee. For the amusement of my friends I have several times performed this seemingly impossible feat, and in no instance have my methods been detected. Its successful accomplishment depends upon two things—the fact that the one who is apparently blindfolded can see distinctly all the time and the fact that the members of his committee are betrayed into becoming his unwitting accomplices. The trick is performed in this manner: The mind reader selects a number of persons—three, for instance—to act as his committee or they may be selected for him by others. One member of the committee remains with the mind reader, the other members, preferably in an open surrey, drive to a distant hotel, where they select a name in the register. They have been instructed to note also the day of the month on which the name was entered. They then return, driving by a circuitous route, but observing carefully every block passed and every corner turned. On their return to the room where the first member of the committee has carefully detained the mind reader, they proceed to blindfold the latter; or rather he blindfolds himself, while permitting the committee to think that they take a leading part in the operation. He first produces a heavy hood, or bag, which he offers for the inspection of the committee. They scrutinize it, outside and in, pull it over their own heads, find themselves in utter darkness and then return the hood, with no discoveries made. The mind reader next places two balls of cotton, or folded kid gloves, against his eyes, and over these a folded handkerchief is bound about his head. He pulls the hood, the mouth of which comes to his shoulders, over all, and announces that he is ready for his task.

TESTING THE COMMITTEE.

At this stage the mind reader goes through a process that he calls "testing the committee." He informs them that a necessary condition of mind reading is that all three members of the committee shall have exact knowledge of the route, the date and the name. He gives plausible reasons why the communications should not be made by word of mouth, and instructs the two members of the committee who possess the knowledge to impart it to their fellow committeeman by making silent tracings with the finger against a blank wall. They obey; a committee always obeys a mind reader. By means of this pantomime the mind reader gains, through his pervious hood, all the knowledge that he wishes, and the rest is easy. After some little by-play he rushes with his committee to the surrey, takes the reins, drives at a furious rate over the selected route, enters the distant hotel, opens the register, finds the name, writes it on a slip of paper and is greeted with ready applause.

The peculiar method of blindfolding must now be described. The handkerchief that is bound about the head exerts its greatest pressure upon the brows. By calling into action the muscles of the forehead, the handkerchief and the gloves are elevated, and vision is permitted beneath the lower margin. The hood is of peculiar construction, and is calculated to deceive the very elect. It is made of four thicknesses of black cloth, of which the second and third have apertures opposite the eyes. The outermost layer is always of some thin material. The innermost, which may be of heavy cheviot, has about the crown a circular seam, which comes in front of the eyes when the hood is on the head. At one place the seam is so constructed that by proper manipulation, known only to the mind reader, it will open to the extent of half an inch. Through this aperture vision is easy, for nothing remains between the eye and the light but the thin outermost layer. When the hood is removed from the head the temporary aperture is closed, and it cannot be detected even by the closest scrutiny and the deftest manipulation. The mind reader's feat of opening a combination lock is accomplished in a similar manner. The committee, while being "tested" in the committee room, reveals the combination to the mind reader by the usual pantomime.

MUSCLE READING.

The methods of mind readers may thus be shown to be those of the conjurer and mountebank. Muscle reading, on the other hand, is a subject worthy of serious investigation. It is the perception